

Docket No. 500.43486X.00
Serial No. 10/772,386
Office Action dated September 21, 2005

REMARKS

I. Introduction

By the present Amendment, claims 1, 8, 9, and 10 have been amended, and claim 13 canceled. Claim 22 is newly presented for consideration. Accordingly, claims 1-12 and 14-22 are now pending in the application. Claims 1 and 22 are independent.

II. Office Action Summary

In the Office Action of September 21, 2005, claims 8-10 were rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph. Claims 1-3, 11, and 14 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,311,819 issued to Stromme et al. ("Stromme"). Claims 4-9, 13, and 15 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,015,703 issued to Keller. Claim 12 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,993,700 issued to Winkler. Claim 10 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of Keller and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,837,064 issued to Tschudin-Mahrer. Claims 17-20 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,966,047 issued to Steiner. Claim 21 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,486,063 issued to Fox et al. ("Fox"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Examiner's indication that claim 16 would be allowable, if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, is noted with appreciation.

Docket No. 500.43486X.00
Serial No. 10/772,386
Office Action dated September 21, 2005

III. Rejections under 35 USC §112

Claims 8-10 were rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention. With respect to this rejection, the Office Action indicates that the phrase "sheet press member" did not have proper antecedent basis in the Specification.

By the present Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 8-10 to address all issues of indefiniteness raised in the Office Action. For example, the phrase "sheet press member" has been revised to properly identify the press members to which the claims refer.

Applicants respectfully submit that, as amended, claims 8-10 are now in full compliance with the requirements of 35 USC §112, second paragraph. Accordingly, this rejection should be withdrawn.

IV. Rejections under 35 USC §102

Claims 1-3, 11, and 14 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Stromme. The Office Action asserts that Stromme discloses all the features recited in these claims. With respect to independent claim 1, for example, the Office Action alleges that Stromme discloses an apparatus, for handling sheets, that comprises a movable sheet transfer member having a transfer surface that is contactable with one of the sheets so that the sheet is transferred by the sheet transfer member. The Office Action indicates that Stromme further provides a sheet supporting surface that is contactable with the sheet being transferred, and information reading sensors that are arranged in the evaluation region to face the sheets transferred by the transfer member. The sensors in the evaluation region

Docket No. 500.43486X.00
Serial No. 10/772,386
Office Action dated September 21, 2005

securely read information in the information reading range as the sheet proceeds through the information reading point.

As amended, independent claim 1 defines an apparatus for handling sheets that comprises:

a sheet transfer member being movable, and having a transfer surface contactable with one of the sheets so that the one of the sheets is transferred by the sheet transfer member,

a sheet supporting surface area being contactable with the one of the sheet transferred by the sheet transfer member,

an information reader arranged to face to the one of the sheet transferred by the sheet transfer member and having in an information reading range including an information reading point, in which reading range an information is securely readable from the one of the sheets, and

a pneumatic blower for applying a pneumatic pressure to the one of the sheets in such a manner that the one of the sheets is urged by the pneumatic pressure toward the sheet supporting surface area.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitation previously recited in claim 13. As amended, the apparatus of independent claim 1 includes a sheet transfer member, a sheet supporting surface, an information reader, and a pneumatic blower. The sheet transfer member is movable and has a transfer surface that can come in contact with one of the sheets so that the sheet can be transferred by the sheet transfer member. The information reader is arranged to face the sheet being transferred and has an information reading range that includes an information reading point. Accordingly, it is possible to securely read information from one of the sheets within the reading range. The apparatus also includes a pneumatic blower for applying pneumatic pressure to the sheet such that the sheet is urged by the pneumatic pressure toward the sheet supporting surface area.

The Office Action alleges that Stromme discloses most of the limitations recited in independent claim 1 (as amended). With respect to claim 13, the Office

Docket No. 500.43486X.00
Serial No. 10/772,386
Office Action dated September 21, 2005

Action implies that Stromme fails to disclose the limitation of a pneumatic blower for applying pneumatic pressure to the sheet and urging it toward the sheet supporting surface area. Keller is relied upon for disclosing this particular limitation. The Office Action alleges that Keller discloses the addition of a blower for applying a pneumatic pressure to the sheet in a manner to urge it toward the sheet supporting guides. Reference is directed to Fig. 4, column 4, lines 50-60. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Review of Keller has failed to provide any disclosure or suggestion for a pneumatic blower as set forth in independent claim 1. Keller does not disclose sheet-supporting guides, and certainly does not disclose sheet supporting guides toward which the sheets can be urged by pneumatic pressure. The element (22) identified in the Office Action is not a sheet-supporting guide. Rather, reference numeral 22 identifies guard meshes and not a sheet-supporting guide as set forth in independent claim 1.

Additionally, Keller appears to teach away from the invention defined by independent claim 1. Keller provides guard meshes, and specifically indicates that these guard meshes "provide no guidance but merely insure that in the event of disturbances out of normal movement the articles cannot contact the heater." (emphasis added). See column 5, lines 1-5. The articles being moved in the Keller device are not blown into contact with the guard meshes, nor are they intended to be blown into contact with the guard meshes, as suggested by the Office Action. Rather, the guard meshes are provided to serve a safety function in the event that "disturbances out of normal movement" occur. Keller simply fails to provide any disclosure or suggestion for "a pneumatic blower for applying a pneumatic pressure to the one of the sheets in such a manner that the one of the sheets is urged by the

Docket No. 500.43486X.00
Serial No. 10/772,386
Office Action dated September 21, 2005

pneumatic pressure toward the sheet supporting surface area," as set forth in independent claim 1.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 is allowable over the art of record.

Claims 2-12 and 14-21 depend, either directly or indirectly, from independent claim 1, and are therefore believed allowable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claim 1. In addition, these claims each introduce novel elements that independently render them patentable over the art of record.

V. Rejections under 35 USC §103

Claims 4-9, 13, and 15 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of Keller. Regarding this rejection, the Office Action alleges that the combination of Stromme and Keller discloses all the limitations recited in these claims.

As previously discussed with respect to independent claim 1, however, Stromme fails to disclose or suggest certain features recited in the claimed invention. The inclusion of Keller does not remedy this failure, because Keller also fails to provide any disclosure or suggestion for the features recited in claims 4-9 and 15. Additionally, the limitation of a pneumatic blower was previously recited in claim 13 (now canceled), and is not disclosed or suggested by Keller.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 4-9 and 15 are patentable over the art of record.

Claim 12 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of Winkler. Claim 10 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of Keller and further in view of Tschudin-Mahrer. Claims 17-20 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over

Docket No. 500.43486X.00
Serial No. 10/772,386
Office Action dated September 21, 2005

Stromme in view of Steiner. Claim 21 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Stromme in view of Fox.

These claims, however, depend from independent claim 1, and are therefore believed allowable for at least the reasons previously set forth with respect to independent claim 1.

Independent claim 22 is newly presented and recites various features that are not disclosed or suggested by the art of record. For example, the cited references do not appear to provide any disclosure or suggestion for first and second transfer members that are arranged with respect to the guide member to direct the forward end of the transferred sheet to contact the surface of the guide member while a part of the sheet remains between one of the transfer members and the information reader.

Accordingly, independent claim 22 is believed to be allowable over the art of record.

VI. Conclusion

For the reasons stated above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Therefore, the issuance of a Notice of Allowance is believed in order, and courteously solicited.

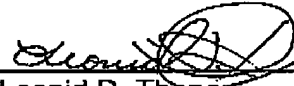
If the Examiner believes that there are any matters which can be resolved by way of either a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

Docket No. 500.43486X.00
Serial No. 10/772,386
Office Action dated September 21, 2005

AUTHORIZATION

Applicants request any shortage or excess in fees in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, and for which no other form of payment is offered, be charged or credited to Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case: 500.43486X00).

Respectfully submitted,
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